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Inventory for

Manuscript Collection
MS - 163

David Curtis Papers

1834-1872

by
Elisabeth Meier
March 2018

½ box
.2 linear feet
Accession no. 69.3466.3

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Abstract

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David Curtis (1805-1872)

Papers, 1834-1872

½ box

Ship carpenter and builder in Bath, Maine.

This collection contains accounts, bills, deeds, and correspondence of David Curtis (1805-1872). Curtis was a mid-nineteenth century Bath shipbuilder who worked for John Henry, Arnold & Co., and Curtis & Cox. The collection is particularly detailed regarding the construction and operation of the *Lisbon* (ship), launched in 1852, a ship timber-buying trip that Curtis took to Saco in 1839, and deeds for the purchase of shipyard and other land in the south end of Bath in the 1850s. There are some domestic accounts and correspondence, but much of the rest of Curtis's career is covered sparsely if at all.

Museum purchase from the estate of Mary Lee (Curtis) Lord.

MS-163. Accession #69.3466.3.

Finding aid (folder level control) in repository.

Added entries—persons:

Cox, Elisha
Curtis, Angier M., Captain (1815-1875)
Curtis, David (1805-1872)
Dinsmore, Joseph Gorham
Henry, John

Added entries—corporate bodies (including vessels):

Arnold & Co.
Curtis & Cox
Lisbon (ship)

Added entries—key terms:

Deeds
Lumber trade
Ship timber
Shipbuilding—Bath (ME)
Ships—owners
Shipyards—Bath (ME)

Acquisition

This collection was purchased at auction from the estate of Mary Lee (Curtis) Lord, David Curtis's granddaughter, in 1969. It arrived with a much larger group of material related to John Abel Lord (now MS-15) and some unrelated family pieces.

Restrictions

There are no restrictions on this collection.

Physical Condition

The documents are stable and legible. Most are in good condition; some have battered edges or are splitting along fold lines.

Processing Notes

In the past, this collection has been housed with MS-15, the John A. Lord Papers. Because the lives of David Curtis and John Lord did not overlap (they are only connected by the Lord's marriage to Mary Curtis, granddaughter of David Curtis), the two collections have been separated.

Historical Note

David Curtis (1805-1872) was born in Harpswell, Maine, to Nehemiah and Jenny (Menander) Curtis. Among his ten siblings, Angier Hyde Curtis (1815-1875) became a master mariner and Paul R. Curtis (1819-1905) became a farmer and shipbuilder in Harpswell.

David Curtis was a ship carpenter. He worked for multiple builders in Bath and Phippsburg, including John Henry, Magoun & Clapp, and R. Morse & Sons. He began building on his own account in the early 1850s, usually as a partner in Arnold & Co., with Augustus Arnold and Elisha Cox, or as part of Curtis & Cox. The two firms had neighboring shipyards on either side of Marshall's Creek in the south end of Bath. (Arnold & Co. occupied the southern portion of the current Maine Maritime Museum property.) In the same decade, David Curtis began purchasing or retaining shares in vessels and acted as managing owner of his own ship, *Lisbon*. Although both his shipbuilding partnerships ended by 1860, Curtis continued to call himself a 'master carpenter' or 'shipbuilder' until his death.

David Curtis married Harriet Lee in 1840; after her death in 1846, he married Lydia Ann Cox. He had five children: Jane Elizabeth (b. 1841), James Henry Skofield (b. 1842), Parker C. (b. 1844), Louise (b. 1850), and Laura (b. 1852).

Scope and Content Note

This collection contains letters, bills, accounts, deeds, and other documents related to David Curtis's life and career. It is far from comprehensive. There is a set of bills and correspondence from a winter that Curtis spent in Saco, Maine, in 1839, purchasing ship timber for the Bath shipbuilder John Henry. A substantial group of deeds outlines Curtis, Cox and Arnold's purchase of land for and around their shipyards in the early 1850s. Accounts, receipts, and a few letters document the construction and operation of the *Lisbon* (ship), launched by Curtis & Cox in 1852. Apart from a small set of bills for timber purchased by Curtis & Cox, however, most of Curtis's other shipbuilding efforts are missing.

The personal papers in this collection are equally scattered. Household bills, accounts, receipts for pew rent, and a few letters represent Curtis's domestic life; promissory notes, tax notices, stock certificates, and fire insurance policies for his home represent his finances. Most of the correspondence mixes personal and professional matters.

This collection also includes an affidavit written by John Dinsmore of Dresden, Maine, emancipating his son, Joseph, for the remainder of his minority.

Box and Folder List

Box	Folder	
1	1	Correspondence, 1839-1869
		Shipbuilding:
	2	Timber purchases, Saco, Maine, January – July 1839
	3	David Curtis, labor receipts, *Alabama* (bark) and *Elvira Owen* (ship), 1844 – 1852
	4	Curtis & Cox, bills and accounts, 1852 – 1853
	5	*Lisbon* (ship), insurance, 1852 – 1856
	6	*Lisbon* (ship), construction, 1852 – 1853
	7	*Lisbon* (ship), operation, 1852 – 1855
	8	Deeds, 1834 – 1856
	9	Personal property insurance, 1848 – 1856
	10	Personal bills and accounts, 1839 – 1872
	11	Miscellaneous papers and ephemera
	12	John Dinsmore, affidavit emancipating Joseph Gorham Dinsmore from minority, 1852